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30 March 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR**SUBJECT: Ambassador Lodge's Weekly Report**

1. The following paragraphs from the Ambassador's weekly report to the President are worth noting. They deal with the by-play involved in the final approval of the new draft Constitution by the Armed Forces Council. Marshal Ky almost failed to carry the day, and would have been unable to do so had not General Thieu finally come to his aid. It is not yet clear to what extent Ky may have jeopardized his political future by forcing through a decision over the opposition of the majority of his colleagues.

2. "Thieu and Ky met strong resistance to their efforts to secure Armed Forces Council approval of the Constitution. Many of the 47 top officers in that body objected to what they referred to as the 'imbalance' between the branches of the government, meaning that they think the legislature is too powerful and the executive is not strong enough. They also were most reluctant to agree to the compromise on transitional provisions which Ky arranged just before coming to the Guam Conference.

3. "To their great credit, Thieu and Ky stood together and argued down the opposition. Thieu in particular might have tried to further his own presidential ambitions by catering to opponents of the Constitution, but did not do so. It required two votes -- the first one in the morning session going against military acceptance of the Constitution. After 'some music and some drink' at lunch, and a great deal of hard reasoning by Thieu and Ky, the Council voted approval.

4. "While a good case can be made that the President is not strong enough, I think a forceful President working with a reasonable majority in the legislature should have no great difficulty in governing the nation under this Constitution. The belief of the other officers that so-called 'civilian politicians' cannot be trusted to play any large role in running the nation has merit because these civilians are not real 'politicians' as we understand the word, but survivors from conspiracies against the French and Diem.

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5. "That Thieu and Ky were able to overcome this resistance is a welcome sign of political responsibility and maturity among the top officers in the Vietnamese military establishment. It is also another welcome indication of their discipline and unity. It is significant that the Armed Forces Council coupled its acceptance of the Constitution with a formal statement of continuing support for the Directorate. Without the unity and discipline of the military, the relative political stability which has prevailed here for the past twenty-one months would not have occurred. I trust it will continue."

GEORGE W. ALLEN
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